

May 22, 2014

The Honorable Aubrey Layne
Office of the Secretary of Transportation
Patrick Henry Building, 3rd Floor
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Re: Proposed Dulles Air Cargo, Passenger and Metro Access Highway

Dear Secretary Layne,

As elected officials representing tens of thousands of constituents in the Dulles South corridor, we are writing to request your immediate attention to the Proposed Dulles Air Cargo, Passenger and Metro Access Highway currently under consideration by VDOT. For the reasons set forth in this letter, we respectfully request that VDOT immediately withdraw its support for Alternative 3C.

As you are aware, this project has already received an unprecedented amount of concern from local residents, who have submitted thousands of comments during a relatively short public comment period. Having listened to our constituents, and given this issue considerable thought ourselves, we find the following points to be very compelling and hope you will, too.

First, the Dulles Air Cargo, Passenger and Metro Access Highway should be considered in concert with the proposed Bi-County Parkway. As a practical matter, one is an extension of the other. **The purpose of this letter is not to express our views on the Bi-County Parkway, but to point out that these two projects are directly related, and one should not be built without the other.** Given the current status of the Bi-County Parkway—which appears to be unknown for months while VDOT works with the Federal Highway Administration—we believe it is premature for VDOT to recommend a route for the Dulles Air Cargo, Passenger and Metro Access Highway at this time.

Second, we believe that VDOT should evaluate the proposed alternatives based on the congestion relief metrics proscribed by the Code of Virginia. Specifically, we believe that VDOT's proposed alternative, Alternative 3C, would likely fail to meet the congestion relief standards as set forth by HB599 (2012) and HB2 (2014) in comparison to Alternative 2. For reasons we outline in the attached analysis, we believe that Alternative 3C would likely be a regional “congestion creator” and not a “congestion reducer” both for motorists in Loudoun, Fairfax and Prince William Counties, and for the future of Washington-Dulles International Airport, an economic engine of Northern Virginia.

Finally, we request that VDOT review Alternative 3C's compliance with Federal Highway Standards for freeways. It is our understanding that express lanes in Alternative 3C are being designed to a freeway standard, yet only one lane in each direction is being proposed for the segment that parallels Route 50, creating a bottleneck by design and limiting future options to expand capacity east-west on Route 50. This would appear to conflict with standards, and certainly with common sense.

Despite our concerns with Alternative 3C, we believe that another VDOT Alternative studied -Alternative 2- has the potential to provide a benefit to both motorists and for the Airport, for reasons we enumerate in the attached analysis.

We request that VDOT rescind its recommendation of Alternative 3C as the preferred route for the corridor, and submit both Alternatives 2 and 3C to objective analysis to determine the congestion reduction and regional mobility impact of each. It is our understanding that VDOT is not required to make a recommendation to localities, the public, and the Commonwealth Transportation Board –and in this case it should not do so at this time.

It is clear to us that VDOT has started down the wrong path with the Dulles Air Cargo, Passenger and Metro Access Highway. However, there is still time for a course correction that will benefit motorists, Dulles Airport, and all of Northern Virginia. We look forward to working with you to ensure an outcome that will provide real benefit for taxpayers and regional mobility. Should you or your staff have any questions or feedback, we will welcome the opportunity to discuss further.

Sincerely,



David Ramadan
Member, Virginia House of Delegates
87th District



Jim LeMunyon
Member, Virginia House of Delegates
67th District



Matthew Letourneau
Loudoun County Board of Supervisors
Dulles District



Dick Black
Member, The Virginia Senate
13th District

Enclosure: Comparative Analysis of Alternatives 3C and 2

Comparative Analysis of Alternatives 3C and 2

The VDOT recommended alternative 3C would expand Route 50 between Northstar Boulevard and Loudoun County Parkway (606) by creating two lanes in the median of Route 50 that would become “express lanes” for the exclusive use of Dulles-Airport bound traffic. There would be one lane for eastbound traffic and one lane for westbound traffic. Route 50 would become limited access, with interchanges built at Northstar Boulevard, Gum Spring Road, and 606. In order to accommodate the median lanes, Route 50 would need to be expanded on each side. VDOT has identified ten existing properties--businesses--that would be significantly impacted or relocated completely. In our view, Alternative 3C has some major limitations:

Impact on Existing Motorists: Due to much needed road construction, Route 50 motorists have been dealing with some of the worst congestion in the Commonwealth for the past 3+ years, with about another year to go. Alternative 3C is another major, intensive construction project that will take years to complete. Unlike the current project, however, the proposed construction will be of limited benefit to residents in the Route 50 corridor. While the Loudoun Countywide Transportation Plan (CTP) does call for Route 50 to become limited access at a future date, it does not call for express lanes in the median, which will limit the ability to expand capacity on Route 50 in the future. Construction on the median of Route 50, which does not currently have enough right of way to accommodate the widening, would be far more intensive than work to install interchanges. The worst choke points on Route 50 are to the east of this project, so even the limited access component of the project will be of little value to motorists.

We understand that certain state legislators in Northern Virginia have asserted that Alternative 2 is not included in Loudoun’s CTP. Neither is Alternative 3C. Most agree that the only alternative that is in the CTP, Alternative 3B, would be the least attractive because it fails to add any additional capacity to Route 50 to handle Bi-County Parkway traffic.

We also understand that certain state legislators in Northern Virginia have asserted incorrectly that Alternative 3C can be accommodated in the existing 200-foot right of way on Route 50. Since they don’t actually represent the Route 50 corridor like we do, perhaps their oversight is understandable. Nevertheless, even without a frontage road, VDOT states that Alternative 3C will need 250 feet of right of way along Route 50. East of Gum Spring Road, there is as little as 170 feet of right of way along Route 50. Therefore, concerns about taking property exist on both roads. Moreover, these facts make it intuitively obvious that Alternative 3C would restrict—or even eliminate—future options to add east-west capacity on this segment of Route 50.

Impact on the Existing Local Road Network and Route 50 Development: Alternative 3C will create a great deal of congestion on local roads, particularly Tall Cedars Parkway, which runs parallel to Route 50, according to VDOT’s traffic study, will be at an ‘F’ Level Of Service (LOS) under this scenario. While Loudoun County is building collector roads on the north and south sides of Route 50, it appears that these roads will not have the capacity to support additional traffic in the 3C scenario. Also, it is our belief that the three interchanges on Route 50 in 3C would be inadequate to serve the over 40,000 residents who live on the south side of 50.

In particular, the lack of an interchange at Stone Springs Blvd. which will replace Gum Spring Road as the northern connection from Route 50 in the Loudoun CTP, is an egregious oversight. HCA Virginia is currently constructing Loudoun’s second full service hospital, StoneSprings Hospital, directly adjacent to Route 50 in this location. Sealing off the Stone Springs Blvd. intersection, as Alternative 3C would do, makes little sense. On the south side, Stone Springs Blvd. is the primary access point for the Stone Ridge community, the second largest in the Dulles South area with currently 2500 households –planned to reach

3260 households. This includes the Stone Ridge Village Center shopping center, the HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital, and the Adler Center for Caring, a new hospice nearing completion. All of these facilities would lose direct Route 50 access under Alternative 3C. Rectifying this oversight would add significantly to the cost estimates for Alternative 3C.

Effectiveness in Supporting Dulles Airport and Future Loudoun Employment Centers: The goal of this project is to make it easier to get to Dulles Airport, to Metro stations, and to future employment centers in Loudoun County. Yet, for the segment that would parallel Route 50, Alternative 3C would provide just one lane in each direction with no opportunities to ever expand. It is hard to believe that spending hundreds of millions on this project and the Bi-County Parkway will pay dividends with just one new lane in each direction provided for this segment.

This is a bottleneck by design, and we can't imagine how it would pass muster in an HB 599 congestion analysis. Keep in mind that the current Route 50 widening project entails the elimination of a bottleneck in which three lanes in each direction presently reduced to two for a three mile segment in southeastern Loudoun County. Why would VDOT plan for a new road that reduces two lanes in each direction down to one in this same area?

Further, we believe that such a proposal may be inconsistent with Federal Highway Administration guidelines. The Commonwealth, Loudoun County and MWAA are spending a great deal of money to widen Route 606 around Dulles Airport, which currently also has one lane in each direction. We know from experience that demand could easily outpace this capacity, and should anything go wrong—such as a disabled vehicle or an accident—within the limited access, single express lane, the results would be catastrophic for airport-bound traffic. It would be extremely shortsighted to construct a one lane, limited access facility.

Lastly, some have asserted that the Metropolitan Washington Airport Authority supports Alternative 3C. This is incorrect. MWAA has publicly expressed no preference for an alternative, and has explicitly stated that all—including Alternative 2—would be compatible with the airport. Should you have questions or concerns on this point, we encourage you to speak with Jack Potter and other MWAA officials.

There is a better alternative under VDOT consideration—Alternative 2.

Alternative 2 provides better access for airport traffic and a much-needed new east-west route for existing motorists between the planned Northstar Boulevard and Route 606. Alternative 2 would be a new, four lane road, running on a route roughly parallel to existing Evergreen Mills Road, which will become a cul de sac in the future by virtue of an approved plan by Brambleton. The location of the road would be well south of Brambleton, on the southern side of the Broad Run, which runs between the Belmont Ridge/Evergreen Mills Road intersection and the new Arcola Fire Station that was recently built on Belmont Ridge. In our view, Alternative 2 is the better option for these reasons:

A Helpful New East-West Connection: Alternative 2 would provide access from the unbuilt section of Northstar Boulevard directly to Route 606. It would help alleviate existing logjams and actually take some traffic off of Route 50. Alternative 2 would provide access to Route 606 from Northstar, linking Dulles South residents with Route 50, the 606 Metro Station, Dulles Airport and Sterling. Residents from the Route 50 corridor—particularly Stone Ridge and points west--would have another option to get over to 606 and points north. The Brambleton community is rapidly growing on the west side, and Alternative 2 would provide a direct link that will not exist otherwise between new areas of development and Route

606. Alternative 2 balances the needs of Brambleton with regional congestion reduction priorities and regional mobility in Northern Virginia.

Minimal Disruption of Existing Routes: Because Alternative 2 would be built on undeveloped land, the multi-year construction would have minimal impact on motorists. As many at VDOT are currently aware, the current Route 50 project has been miserable for residents, resulting in some of the worst traffic conditions in the entire Commonwealth on a daily basis. These same motorists are about to be impacted by the Route 606 widening project. How many times will the same group of motorists be forced to suffer through difficult and costly construction projects? VDOT's current analysis by definition does not take into account the disruption and community impacts from Route 50 construction—which would be significant. Although VDOT has cited environmental factors as a consideration in recommending Alternative 3C, we believe that when considered in a broader context including likely commercial and residential development in the area in the 3C scenario, the difference in environmental disturbance between Alternative 2 and Alternative 3C is less than is claimed. In particular, concerns regarding floodplain and wetlands expressed by others who favor Alternative 3C seem to be in conflict with proposed plans by the Brambleton Developers to build out the area. If a new road has an environmental impact, as they assert, then it would seem that new development in the same general location would also have an impact! Alternative 2 would provide for a balanced approach with respect to development, the environment, and regional mobility.

More Space for Traffic: Traffic would not be squeezed into one lane in each direction. Alternative 2 is planned for two lanes in each direction, resulting in much better traffic flow and meeting standards for the type of roadway being constructed. Alternative 2 does not create a bottleneck.

Cost to Taxpayers: Alternative 2 is about the same cost as Alternative 3C. However, the taxpayers will get a four lane road with access to the local residents vs. a two lane road with no access to local residents.